

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 NEAE-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02

INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15

USIA-06 OMB-01 SAM-01 ACDA-07 MC-02 EB-07 TRSE-00

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P 031450Z AUG 76

FM AMEMBASSY JIDDA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 5486

C O N F I D E N T I A L JIDDA 5353

DEPT PASS SECDEF

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MASS, SA, US

SUBJECT: SAUDI ARMS PURCHASES

1. UNDERSEC POLITICAL AFFAIRS MANSOURI ASKED ME TO COME THIS MORNING FOR DISCUSSION OF A "MILITARY SUBJECT." HE PRODUCED FOUR-PAGE NOTE FROM SAUDI MINISTRY OF DEFENSE WHICH DISCUSSED ALLEGED STATEMENT OF DEPSEC OF DEFENSE CLEMENTS ON SUBJECT OF ALLEGED SAUDI DESIRE TO PURCHASE F-14 AND F-15 AIRCRAFT. NOT WAS BASED ON DESPATCH OF CORRESPONDENT KESHISHIAN TO SAUDI NEWS AGENCY (SNA) WHICH ALLEGED DEPSEC CLEMENTS STATED US HAD TURNED DOWN SAUDI DESIRE TO PURCHASE SUCH AIRCRAFT ON GROUNDS THAT SAUDIS NOT YET PREPARED TO HANDLE THEM AND THAT IT WAS BETTER FOR SAUDIS TO BUY LESS COMPLICATED F-5'S FOR WHICH SAUDIS HAD PLACED ORDER OF 100, OF WHICH HALF HAD BEEN DELIVERED. DESPATCH ALSO ALLEGED DEPSECDEF HAD NOTIFIED COMPANIES CONCERNED THAT SAUDIS WOULD NOT BE PURCHASING F-14'S AND 15'S. DESPATCH CONTINUED WITH CLEMENTS' STATEMENT THAT AMERICAN ARMS THIS YEAR WILL COST SAUDI ARABIA \$4 BILLION, AND THAT REAL REASON FOR CLEMENTS' STATEMENT IS THAT CERTAIN KNOWN GROUPS IN UNITED STATES CLAIM THESE ARMS AND EQUIPMENT ENDANGER

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POLICY OF MAINTAINING BALANCE BETWEEN ARABS AND ISRAELIS.

SUCH GROUPS ARE POINTING OUT THAT KINGDOM OF SAUDI ARABIA SUPPORTED EASTERN FRONT IN 1973 WAR. REPORT ADDED THAT DEPSECDEF DECLARED KINGDOM HAS 95 FIGHTERS INCLUDING 50 F-5'S AND HAS NOT ENOUGH PILOTS FOR PLANES ALREADY ORDERED.

2. I SAID I HAD SEEN NEWSPAPER REPORTS OF WHAT DEPSECDEF CLEMENTS HAD SAID ON SUBJECT. IT SEEMED TO ME THAT HE WAS TRYING TO PUT INTO PROPER CONTEXT RECENT ALLEGATIONS THAT US WAS PLANNING TO SELL SAUDIS F-14'S AND F-15'S, AND THAT HE HAD EXPRESSED VIEW THAT SUCH PURCHASES WOULD BE PREMATURE IN VIEW OF FACT THAT F-5 ORDER ONLY HALF DELIVERED AND THAT PROGRAM INCLUDING PILOT TRAINING STILL REQUIRED CONSIDERABLE TIME FOR COMPLETION. MANSOURI QUESTIONED ME CLOSELY AS TO WHETHER DEPSECDEF CLEMENTS HAD DECLARED THAT SAUDIS HAD BEEN INFORMED THAT THEY WOULD NOT BE ALLOWED TO PURCHASE F-14'S OR 15'S. I SAID I HAD SEEN NOTHING IN THAT SENSE, THAT DEPSECDEF CLEMENTS HAD LIMITED HIS COMMENT TO STATEMENT SUCH PURCHASE WOULD BE PREMATURE BEFORE F-5 ORDER AND TRAINING COMPLETED. DEPSECDEF WAS TRYING TO COPE WITH ALLEGATIONS THAT WE SHIP ARMS EVERYWHERE WHETHER NEEDED OR NOT. HIS PRESENTATION WAS REASONABLE AND BASED ON COMMON SENSE, I SAID. MANSOURI, WHO HAD TO REPORT TO PRINCE SULTAN ON MATTER, SEEMED SATISFIED, SAYING I HAD GIVEN ALL MATERIAL HE NEEDED TO DEAL WITH MATTER. HE DID ASK FOR STATEMENT OF RECORD WHICH MR. CLEMENTS HAD MADE. I SAID I WOULD REQUEST ONE. I ALSO OFFERED TO VISIT PRINCE SULTAN OR ANYONE ELSE ON SUBJECT IF NEEDED, BUT HE INDICATED THIS NOT NECESSARY. HE ADDED THAT EMBARRASSING ASPECT OF MATTER IS PUBLICITY. I SAID WE SOMETIMES ARE FORCED TO SAY THINGS TO KEEP MEDIA FROM PUBLISHING VERSIONS EVEN MORE EMBARRASSING.

3. PLEASE PROVIDE ME WITH ANY MATERIAL PERTAINING TO THIRD FROM LAST SENTENCE ABOVE.

PORTER

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